United Nations

Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ One Nepalese UNIFIL soldier killed and three injured in clash between armed elements and United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon south of Kafra.

+ President George Vassiliou, leader of Greek Cypriot community, gives his view at Headquarters of recently-adjourned face-to-face talks on future of Cyprus.

+ Iraq begins large-scale destruction of its stocks of mustard agent, manufactured for chemical weapons, under supervision of United Nations Special Commission on Iraqi Disarmament.

+ Slovenia says it has documentation of more than 80 cases of violations of humanitarian law in territory of former Yugoslavia.

+ Relationship between arms control and peace-keeping discussed in First Committee; delegates comment on Secretary-General's report "New dimensions of arms regulation and disarmament in post-cold-war era".

+ Growing number of fatalities and injuries among United Nations peace-keeping personnel make it incumbent upon Organization to seek their maximum protection, Special Political Committee is told.

+ Switzerland offers to provide temporary facilities for ex-detainees from Bosnia-Herzegovina.

+ Iraq calls for return of $1 million, frozen in its Mission's New York bank accounts.

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A United Nations spokesman announced today that one Nepalese soldier had been killed and three others injured during a clash in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) area, between armed elements and UNIFIL just south of the village of Kafra, in the Nepalese battalion sector.

(more)

The incident occurred when the Nepalese battalion returned fire in self-defence at local armed elements who had attacked two positions of the Nepalese battalion with small arms fire. The fire lessened after 30 minutes, but continued sporadically during the day. The UNIFIL authorities were taking every step possible to contain the incident, the spokesman said.

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President George Vassiliou, leader of the Greek Cypriot community, today described the recently-adjourned face-to-face talks on the future of Cyprus as "useful". Addressing the press at Headquarters, he said the talks had served to help clarify beyond any doubt what the positions of the two sides were. Though no progress had been made because, he said, of the Turkish side's rejection of the principles of the Set of Ideas for an overall framework agreement and of the map allocating land transfers between the two communities, they had been able to exchange views on the basic concepts.

As a result of the work done during these last weeks, he said, the next round of talks should be able to progress more productively.

Settlement of the Cyprus problem -- which was long overdue -- would not only be to the benefit of Turkish and Greek Cypriots alike, he said, but would also act as an example for similar problems around the world.

Following the adjournment of the talks yesterday, it was announced that the two sides had agreed that the process aimed at concluding work on the Set of Ideas would be continued in early March 1993. They would take into account the resolution to be adopted by the Security Council after it considers the Secretary-General's report on this latest round of meetings.

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Iraq began today, under the supervision of the United Nations Special Commission on Iraqi Disarmament, the large-scale destruction of its stocks of mustard agent, manufactured for chemical weapons.

According to a communiqué issued by the Commission today, the incinerator at the Muthanna State Establishment, which operates at temperatures of 1100 degrees centigrade to destroy chemical warfare agents and precursors, was built by Iraq to a design approved by a panel of international experts set up by the Special Commission.

The incinerator is expected to be able to destroy on average 3 to 4 tonnes of agent a day. Destruction activities are expected to last about one year.

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Slovenia says it can provide documented data and information about more than 80 cases with identified and unidentified perpetrators who have committed violations of humanitarian law in the territory of former Yugoslavia.

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According to a letter to the Secretary-General from the Mission of Slovenia to the United Nations, dated 5 November, the information concern killings and injuries of civilians, indiscriminate use of weapons, bombing, shooting and destroying civilian targets and private property, looting, etc. "during the 10-day aggression against Slovenia ... committed by the members of the Yugoslav Army".

The letter said Slovenia had given shelter to more than 70,000 temporary refugees from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, among whom were many victims or eyewitnesses of tortures, rapes and other forms of violent, inhuman and humiliating treatment. Numerous temporary refugees eyewitnessed mass and individual killings and other violations of humanitarian law.

The letter said Slovenia would continue to gather information and would cooperate with the Commission of Experts set up by the Security Council to investigate violations against humanitarian law in former Yugoslavia. Document S/247 89

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The changing role of the triad of United Nations bodies dealing with disarmament -- the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission -- was discussed yesterday by the First Committee (Political and Security), as it completed its discussion of the Secretary-General's report entitled "New dimensions of arms regulation and disarmament in the post-cold-war era".

The increasing role of the Security Council and of the Secretary-General himself in disarmament and "peace enforcement" activities was also highlighted. In his address to the Committee, Vladimir Petrovsky, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, said the Committee should concentrate on the substance of disarmament and international security issues, rather than on the form, and go ahead boldly in an unorthodox and innovative manner.

Five draft resolutions were introduced during the afternoon session yesterday, including one which would have the General Assembly express grave concern regarding any use of nuclear wastes that would constitute radiological warfare and have grave implications for the national security of all States. The Assembly would also express concern at the recently reported effort to dump radiological and toxic wastes in Somalia.

A second draft resolution introduced by Kenya would have the Assembly strongly renew its call to all States to respect the continent of Africa and its surrounding areas as a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Stressing that the full disclosure of South Africa's nuclear programme was essential to the peace and security of the region and the implementation of the Declaration on the Denuclearization of Africa, the Assembly would call upon that country to continue to comply with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards agreement in full.

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The growing number of fatalities and injuries among peace-keeping and other personnel from hostile actions in areas of deployment made it incumbent upon the Organization to seek ways of ensuring the maximum protection of United Nations peace-keepers, the representative of Ukraine told the Special Political Committee this morning. He said the 45-Power draft resolution he was introducing had been prompted by the truly alarming situation regarding their safety.

The draft strongly demanded, he continued, that host countries and all parties to a conflict take all measures possible to ensure the safety of peace-keeping and other United Nations personnel. The General Assembly should urge the Secretary-General to conclude a status of forces agreement with the parties concerned, emphasizing their obligations to respect the international status of United Nations operations.

In certain cases, according to the draft, the Security Council might make it clear that it would be prepared to take "further steps in accordance with the Charter", should the purpose of a peace-keeping operation be systematically frustrated by provocative attacks against United Nations personnel.

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Switzerland has announced that it would provide for a three-month transit period for 1.500 ex-detainees from Bosnia-Herzegovina, while longer-term safe haven could be arranged in other countries.

In a press release issued today at Headquarters, the Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, M. Douglas Stafford, welcomed the Swiss decision which, he said, would considerably speed up the urgent evacuation of detainees from camps. He warned, however, that thousands of prisoners continued to languish in detention camp because they had no place to go.

As of Thursday, some 16 nations had offered temporary refuge for 2,795 of the estimated 7,000 to 10,000 detainees in Bosnia-Herzegovina. On 1 October, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) evacuated the first of the detainees -- 1,560 men who were taken from a detention camp in northern Bosnia to a UNHCR-assisted transit center in Croatia. About 1,000 of this initial group remained there, awaiting transport to countries that have already offered them refuge.

In related news today, the Security Council held consultations this afternoon during which it received a briefing by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Sadako Ogata, on the refugee situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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The representative of Iraq this morning called for the return of some $1 million, with interest, which had been frozen in his mission's accounts in the Bank of New York, following the Security Council's imposition of sanctions. He spoke in the Sixth Committee (Legal), which is currently considering the report of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country.

Safa Shihab Ahmed of Iraq said the funds were needed for the living expenses of the mission personnel and constituted no threat to the host country or its State Department. Attorneys for the Iraqi Mission had sought to resolve the matter with the United States Treasury, to no avail, he continued. The Iraqi Mission had contacted the Secretary-General directly, but could not resolve the situation.

In related news, the Security Council held consultations this afternoon on Iraq.

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